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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION

Letter dated 13 January 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I enclose herewith two letters that His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Somol, Chairman of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, addressed to me on 3 April and 7 July 1997 respectively. I am also enclosing my reply to Mr. Somol dated 14 July 1997.

I kindly request you to have these three letters distributed as official documents of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 3.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer

Annex I

LETTER DATED 3 APRIL 1997 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

I should like to refer to the meeting I had with a delegation of distinguished Arab ambassadors headed by the Chairman of the Arab Group regarding my reply to the letter of the Ambassador of Israel concerning parts of the statement you made in the Commission on 11 March 1997.

I am personally very sorry for any harm this may have caused you. It was certainly not my intention to do so.

Although I consider it my prerogative as Chairman to react to the letter of the Ambassador of Israel, I did not realize that it would have been better to consult with the Bureau before undertaking any such action. I will bear this in mind in the future.

Please be assured Mr. Ambassador, that it is my firm intention and duty to continue to be an impartial Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed) Miraslav SOMOL
Chairman of the fifty-third session
of the Commission on Human Rights

Annex II

LETTER DATED 7 JULY 1997 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

I come back once again to the issue of your statements made during the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights containing some allegations vis-á-vis Israel.

As I promised, I send you copies of letters of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, concerning the issue, in which the Secretary-General expressed his personal opinion as to the allegation made and also expressed the opinion that the Chairman of the Commission had to call the speaker to order in such a case.

I would like to inform you that I had received requests to do my best to find a solution to the problem and set the records of the Commission straight. Following our conversation with Vice Minister Kovanda I expect any reaction of yours as agreed. I would highly appreciate if we could find a suitable solution to the situation for all sides, both the delegations concerned and myself as Chairman of the Commission.

(Signed) Miraslav SOMOL
Chairman of the fifty-third session
of the Commission on Human Rights

Annex III

LETTER DATED 14 JULY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

I thank you for your letter dated 7 July 1997, and I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that my statement before the Commission on Human Rights was an ordinary statement, made on the basis of many sources, including Press sources, the same as does any other delegation.

I do not think that there is any problem in doing so, or that I have exceeded the rules of order in the session. The proof is that neither you, in your capacity as Chairman of the Commission, nor any of your collaborators, who were sitting on the podium, uttered any remark, saying that I have transgressed the order, or that I have exceeded my status as head of the delegation of Palestine, who was just enumerating some continued Israeli crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people, violating, daily, the human rights and the principles of international law, since the Israeli military forces occupied the rest of the Palestinian territory in 1967. In fact, these violations have been condemned by the Commission on Human Rights in all its sessions, for more than 25 years.

Moreover, the Commission on Human Rights has condemned the Israeli occupation authorities for committing war crimes, crimes of genocide, and crimes which have been disturbing the peace and security of mankind for more than 25 years. In this field, I would like to ask you to refer to the following resolutions of the Commission to be informed of the persistent Israeli crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people:

1. Commission on Human Rights resolution 3 (XXVIII) of 22 March 1972.

2. Commission on Human Rights resolution 1983/3 of 15 February 1983.

3. Commission on Human Rights resolution 1984/11 of 29 February 1984.

4. Commission on Human Rights resolution 1989/2 of 17 February 1989.

in addition to tens of other resolutions in which the Commission on Human Rights condemned Israel for committing crimes classified by international law as war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes disturbing the security and peace of mankind and crimes of genocide.

I think that what should be of interest to you today, in your capacity as Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, is to work to put an end to the persistent crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people to its insubordination to the will of the international community, and to its disregard of the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly and the Security Council, which was manifest and certain in the report of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan (document S/1997/494 of 26 June 1997).

Concerning your desire to find solutions to the problem, I do not see that there is any problem which needs a solution, except introducing the Israelis responsible for the aforementioned crimes to the Hague War Crimes Tribunal, and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Palestinian territory including Jerusalem, as well as from the other occupied Arab territories, so that the Palestinian people could practise their national rights, first of which is their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State of Palestine on their national soil; only then would peace and security prevail in the region.

(Signed) Nabil RAMLAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Observer